

February 24, 2014

Testimony for Bill SB No. 54 An Act Concerning Collaboration Between Boards of Education and Law Enforcement Personnel.

Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the Judiciary Committee.

I am writing testimony in support of the proposed changes to statute as outlined in Bill #54. My name is Carolyn Goodridge. I am a social worker and legislative liaison for the Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents. I have been an active member of the Keep the Promise Coalition for Children, and we have had ongoing concerns about the rising number of students entering the juvenile justice system as a result of officers placed in schools. There seems to be little delineation of duties between the educational discipline and the officers' responses to incidents in the school. Many children from foster care have had traumatic experiences with police officers, who are often the ones who remove them from their homes into foster care. If an incident occurs at school that is educational in nature, and the police officer responds first, the behavior is likely to escalate to something more; if the teacher/administrator responds first, the incident can often result in less difficult circumstances. It appears that children are being arrested for issues that should be handled by school personnel rather than police. If a memorandum is created in each school, everyone would have direction as to when the police officer should intervene.

The second change mentioned in this bill is to require reports of the incidents to be filed and tracked. This data can be very important in determining the nature of incidents. This will help schools and officers to better plan for the future as to what trainings may be needed, what type of responses work best, etc. Statistics have shown that once a child enters juvenile justice, their prognosis for educational success and success in life diminishes.

Please consider supporting this bill.

Carolyn Goodridge